

H₂💧 for ME, Inc.

working to increase protection of our fresh water and OUR investment in Maine's economic future

Commissioner Patrick McGowan
Department of Conservation
22 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0022

Dear Commissioner McGowan:

As you know from our recent meetings, I am deeply concerned about the state's course of action regarding bottled water operations in Maine. Current state water extraction policy, exemplified by the state's only contract with a bottled water company, approaches malfeasance. Maine citizens deserve better -- better contract negotiation and better public policy.

In the next few days I will be announcing details of a citizen's initiative known as **H₂💧 for ME**, which will lead to the establishment of the Water Resource Conservation Board and the Maine Water Dividend Trust. The Maine Water Dividend Trust, into which will be deposited a per gallon fee on water bottled for resale, will simultaneously benefit Maine citizens, small businesses, small farms, and our water resource. You are aware of this effort from our previous conversations. I *strongly* urge you and the Governor to take a **bold** stand to support this important initiative but more immediately, I urge you when entering into or renegotiating contracts for the sale of water beneath state property to negotiate a return for the state comparable to what we will be asking for in the citizen's initiative.

H₂💧 for ME, will offer a very significant piece of environmental legislation. *Please* help make this initiative a part of conservation policy and lead Maine and the nation in this important and innovative water resource management opportunity.

- **Maine CANNOT continue to squander its valuable natural resource -- water.**

I know you inherited an unfortunate contract from the previous administration and a previous legislature. This contract permits the sale of water from Range Pond State Park to a private entity for a mere one-half cent a gallon (\$.005 per gallon). As we discussed in your office at a March 2004 meeting, Maine's citizens deserve, and will insist, that this water contract be renegotiated. Are we even sure that the awarding of the contract complied with state contracting procedures? This water payment fee borders on the laughable. Maine citizens, as landowners, **deserve** a fair price for their water. However, instead of receiving just compensation, the citizens of Maine are only receiving approximately \$1,300 per day as provided by the contract rates on file in your office. Moreover, we can find no evidence of competitive bidding leading to that contract award. If this resource were owned by a private company the shareholders would likely have a right to bring an action against the managing officers for squandering the assets of the corporation.

H₂💧 for ME, Inc.

working to increase protection of our fresh water and OUR investment in Maine's economic future

Our state government is practically giving away our precious natural resource --water. As the water leaves Maine at an alarming rate, it is time to ask the question:

Whose water is it?

The answer is obvious: the people of Maine.

Citizens have invested their hard earned money, publicly and privately, in cleaning up Maine's water for more than 35 years. The citizens of Maine deserve an appropriate return on that investment.

Charging a twenty-cent per gallon extraction fee and investing this money in the Maine Water Dividend Trust can return *real* dividends to the people of Maine.

- **Money earned from this water extraction fee can be loaned to help all Maine small businesses, including farmers and veterans.**

This citizen's initiative is unique because it not only establishes environmental monitoring and protection of the state's aquifers but it also enhances the quality of life for Maine taxpayers and small businesses.

Unlike the Range Pond "sweetheart" deal you inherited, this initiative will help hundreds of small businesses. No longer will small business owners with great ideas be forced to leave Maine to obtain adequate funding to pursue their dreams. These small business owners include farmers, returning veterans and entrepreneurs. Think about it: We can keep farmers growing food in Maine, give our veterans something to look forward to when they return home, and reverse the "brain drain" by keeping more Maine young people here. Compare this to one corporate entity that takes our water for free, makes millions of dollars, and returns little profit to the citizens of Maine while making money for corporate investors outside of this state and, yes, outside of this country.

How do Maine people gain?

Whose water is it?

- **Money earned from this water extraction fee will be used to define sustainability of one of our most important natural resources -- water.**

By creating and funding the independent Water Resource Conservation Board, we will define sustainability in terms of Maine's groundwater for the first time ever. This will further define the level of impact the citizens of Maine are willing to endure regarding groundwater extraction. Why leave the issue of sustainability to the corporate entities taking the water? Their primary motivation is maximizing profits. Water is too critical to our survival not to leave its management to the people of

H₂💧 for ME, Inc.

working to increase protection of our fresh water and OUR investment in Maine's economic future

Maine. I believe that Maine people see their clean water as a human right and not just a tradable commodity.

Again I ask, *Whose water is it?*

- **This legislation is pro-business and pro-environment at the same time
Most of all, this Legislation is pro-people of Maine.**

Rather than providing windfall profits to corporations at the expense of Maine resources, this legislation encourages growth of our economy and sound management of one of our most important natural resources – water. In addition, this initiative delivers to the citizens of Maine a return on their extensive investment in clean water.

Think about it – this legislation will provide a business development boost for the returning veteran, the struggling farmer, or the entrepreneur while ensuring a sufficient quantity of premium drinking water for all Maine people, both for today and the future.

Whose water is it?

This water belongs to *all* of us and with that ownership comes the responsibility to ensure that it is there for all future Mainers.

H₂💧 for ME needs your support. As the Honorable Governor Baldacci states in his environmental vision statement, “My overall goal is nothing less than to preserve our natural legacy, to undo past damage and to build a truly sustainable Maine way of life. “ In supporting this initiative, you will be helping all Maine citizens as well as sustaining for the future our essential resource -- water. It only makes Common Sense.

With encouragement,

Jim Wilfong
President
H₂💧 for ME, Inc.

cc: Governor John Baldacci
Citizens of Maine